Steps taken by Government to prevent criminalisation of politics

298. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR
SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps were taken by Government during and on the eve of recent General Elections to the Lok Sabha to prevent criminalisation of politics and criminals from entering the political fray; and

(b) what further steps have been or are being taken in the direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPTT. OF LEGAL AFFAIRS. LEGISLATIVE DEPTT. AND DEPTT-OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) The Election Commission by an Order dated 17.1.1996 had directed the State Governments/Union territory Administrations to undertake special drives to compile list of persons who had indulged in past in booth capturing; intimidation, impersonation etc.; to update the list of history-sheeters, declared absconders, fugitive criminals etc; to unearth illicit arms and ammunition; to unearth illicit liquor making factories etc. Further, any person who is convicted for any offence mentioned in section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 gets disqualified for such periods as are mentioned in that section.

(b) Certain measures arc under consideration of the Government to curb electoral malpractices and criminalisation of the electoral process. These include enhancement in punishment of certain existing electoral offences, creation of certain new electoral offences, amplification of offence of booth capturing and making it more stringent in case offender is a government servant, reduction in compaign period etc. Use of photo identity cards and Electronic Voting Machines would also help in reducing electoral mal-practices.

Right of Franchise for Prisoners

299. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR
SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the All India Lawyers* Forum for Civil Liberties had appealed on the eve of recent elec tions to the Lok Sabha to ensure that over 2-5 million prisoners in different jails in the country are able to exercise their right of franchise; and

(b) if so, what arrangements were made for securing due exercise of their democratic right of franchise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPTT. OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPTT. AND DEPTT. OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Decline in Growth rate of Deposits and Credit of Commercial Banks

300. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the growth rate of deposits and credit of commercial banks declined during the financial year 1995-96;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) to what extent the bank credit declined;

(d) whether the growth in aggregate deposit moved down to 8% from 11.2% in the previous year; and

(e) if so, what steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (e) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that during the year 1995-96 (31st March 1995 to 29th March 1996) there was a decline in the rate of growth